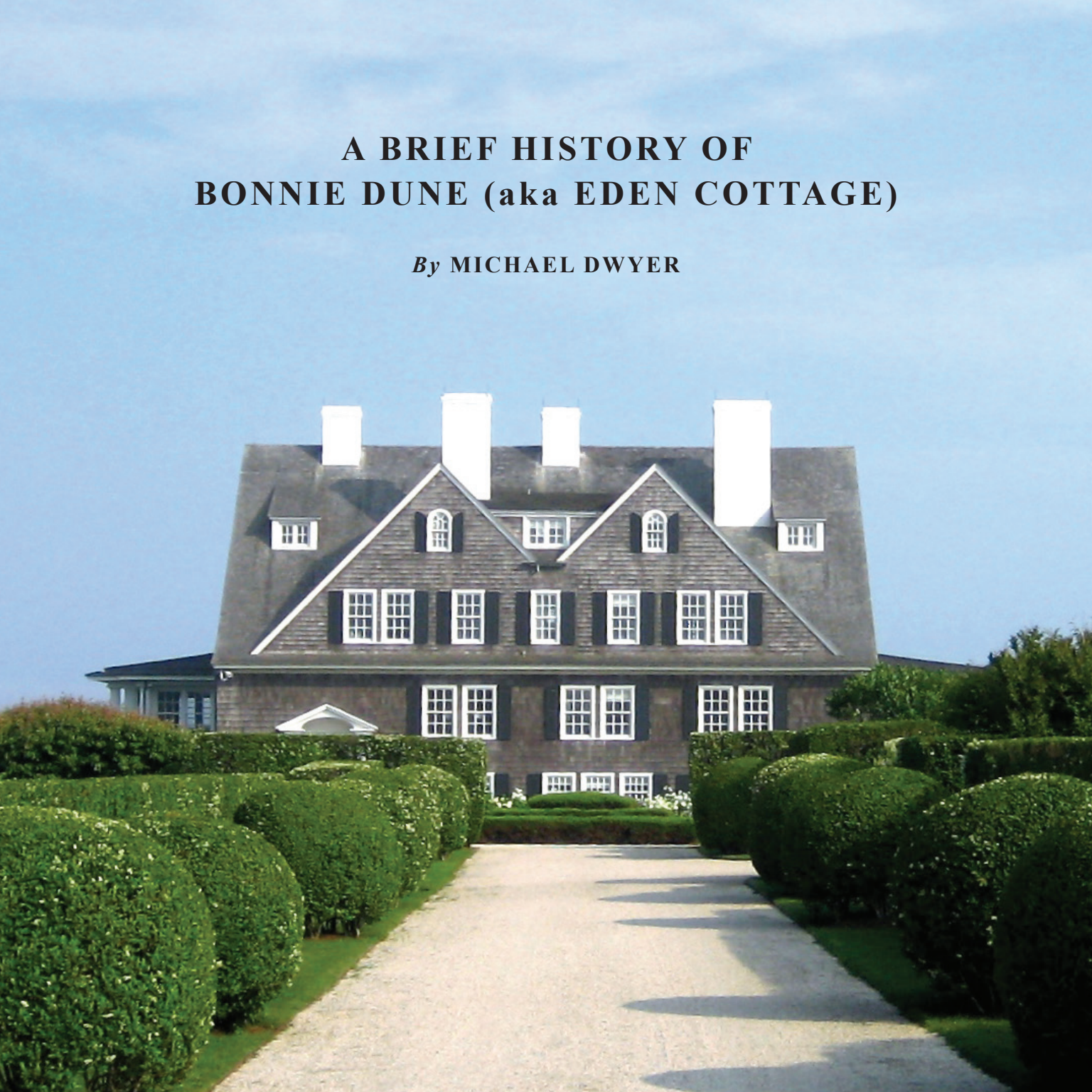
A BRIEF HISTORY OF BONNIE DUNE (aka EDEN COTTAGE)

By MICHAEL DWYER



F O S T E R.
Mrs. S. Lewis
Jno. Nugent
Valentine Schenck
E. H. Foster
OLD TOWN ROAD
Dr. Hildreth
Robt. Olyphant
2a
"THE ARCHES"
G. E. Harney
Chas. R. Henderson
2½a
DUNE
LANE
ROAD
William Mitchell
Robt. Olyphant
"DUNE EDNA"
"EDNA COTTAGE"
J. Rongaue Brown
Rev Wm Chester
Dr. T. G. Thomas
"SANDHURST"
OCEAN

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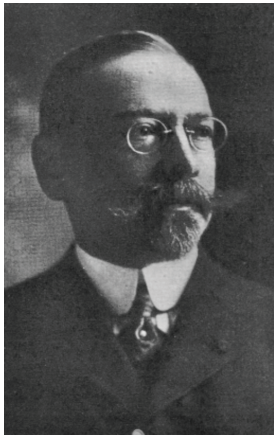

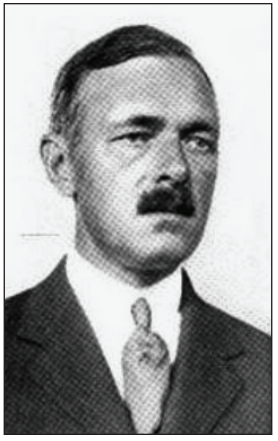

Above: (l to r): Robert Olyphant, Jr., Anson McCook Beard, and F. Burrall Hoffman, Jr.
Opposite: a detail of the 1894 Beers Map of Southampton, New York
at the intersection of Gin Lane and Wyandanch Lane, where in 1888
Robert Olyphant built Dune Eden and Eden Cottage.

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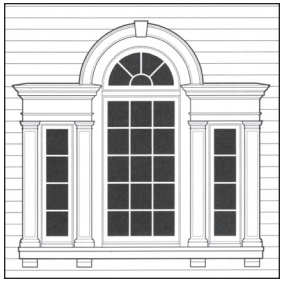


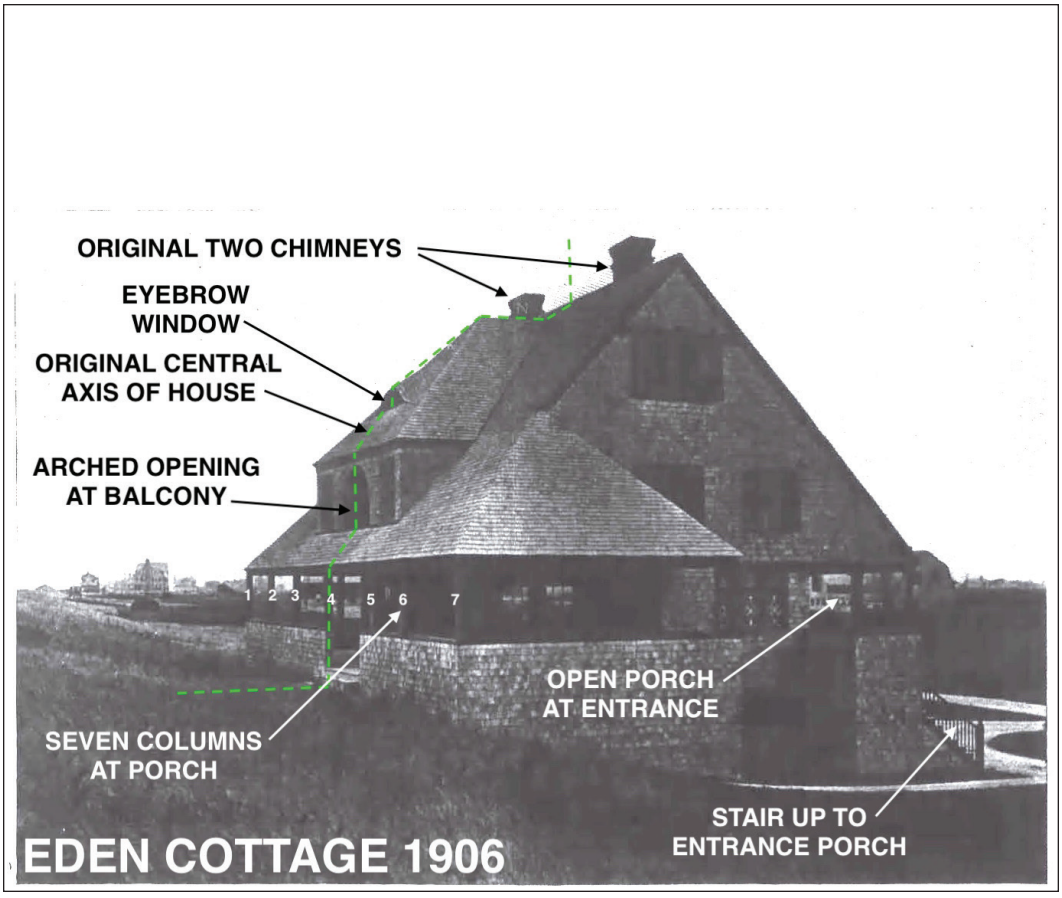
Tripartite Press
tripartitepress@gmail.com

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BONNIE DUNE (AKA EDEN COTTAGE):

Those who travel along Gin Lane in Southampton on New York's Long Island will likely notice the distinctive, north-facing facade of Bonnie Dune, with its "twin peak" gables and its picturesque array of chimneys. I first saw the house in 1993 as a member of the team of architects from Buttrick White & Burtis sent from New York City to survey the house in preparation for a major renovation, executed by Samuel G. White, a founding partner of the firm.[1] I don't recall much discussion about its history: we discovered an old steamer trunk in the attic, marked "Lorillard"—apparently abandoned decades ago by a former owner, and as for the architect who designed the house, well, no one knew. "Perhaps it was Stanford White," we speculated. After all, "hadn't he designed most of the distinguished houses on Long Island?"

This missing attribution stuck with me for over thirty years, a kind of *tinnitus interrogativum* that went silent for long intervals but inevitably returned, louder than ever. Searches in libraries and archives inevitably ended in failure, and it was only the invention of the "search engine" that made success possible: searching online one day, I discovered a photograph depicting a smaller version of the house, published in 1906 and again in 1910 in the real estate section of the *Brooklyn Eagle*. The photograph revealed that the house underwent a substantial alteration sometime after 1910, but when and by whom? I learned some of the answers in the summer of 2023, when browsing the *Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, a journal with a bounty of information about architects and their projects, Having searched for thirty fruitless years, I learned within fifteen minutes the name of the architect who prepared drawings for an addition; the owner who engaged him to do so; and the contractor who was engaged to build the addition based on the architect's drawings.[2]

Eden Cottage (Bonnie Dune's original name) and a second house, Dune Eden, were designed by an architect unknown to me and built in 1888 by Robert Olyphant, Jr. (1853–1928), scion of a family that made its money in the China trade.[3] In 1897,[4] Olyphant sold Eden Cottage to Elijah R. Kennedy (1844–1926), a Brooklyn insurance executive who promptly changed the name of the house to


ORIGINAL TWO CHIMNEYS
EYEBROW WINDOW
ORIGINAL CENTRAL AXIS OF HOUSE
ARCHED OPENING AT BALCONY
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
OPEN PORCH AT ENTRANCE
SEVEN COLUMNS AT PORCH
STAIR UP TO ENTRANCE PORCH
EDEN COTTAGE 1906

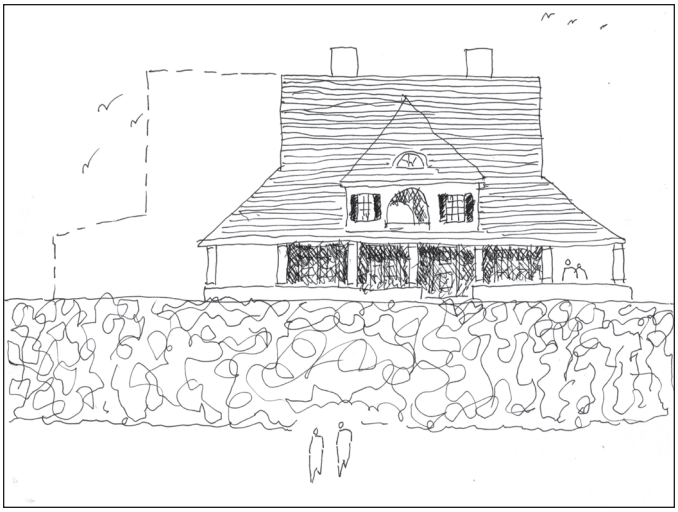
A photograph of Bonnie Dune (aka Eden Cottage) published in the *Brooklyn Eagle* in 1906 and again in 1910; notes added by the author.

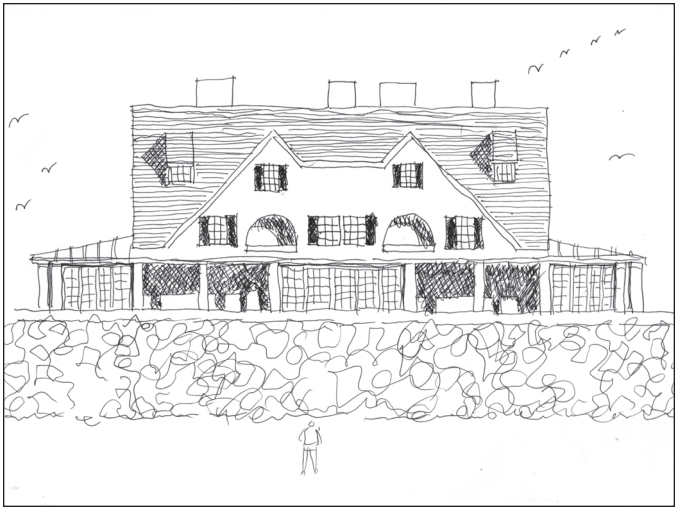
Bonnie Dune. In 1900, both Olyphant and Kennedy were listed in the summer edition of the Social Register:

> Mr. & Mrs. Elijah R. Kennedy, "Bonnie Dune," Southampton, LI.
> Mr. & Mrs. Robert Olyphant, "Dune Eden," Southampton, LI.

Kennedy enjoyed the use of his cottage for several years but in 1905 began renting it to others. The names of his tenants can be found in the cottage and cottager lists published in the local newspapers: James E. Brown (1905 and 1906), August Belmont, Jr, (1908), Lyman Kendal (1909), A. Duncan Butler (1910), Lorenzo Semple (1911), and Anson McCook Beard (1912). Apparently Beard rented the house to "kick the tires" for at the end of the 1912 season, he bought it from Kennedy. On October 26th, the *Record & Guide* reported that, "Alfred E. Schermerhorn sold for Elijah R. Kennedy his 'Bonnie Dune' on the southwest corner of Gin Lane and Wyandanch Lane on the ocean to Anson McCook Beard who will alter the residence for his own occupancy." Beard (best known today as the grandfather of photographer Peter Beard) was the son of Oliver Beard, a lawyer and owner of a Brooklyn dock and warehouse concern. According to his Yale class of 1895 report, published in 1911:

> [Anson McCook Beard] prepared at the Riverview Military Academy, Poughkeepsie. In college he played tackle for two years on the university football team, rowed on the freshman crew, and was captain of his class crew which won the Lake Whitney interclass regatta in his junior year; and was twice a close competitor for a place on the university crew. He was a member of Eta Phi, Delta Kappa Epsilon, Skull and Bones, and was a member of the Junior Promenade Committee. On April 2, 1902, at St. Paul, Minn., he married Miss Ruth Hill, daughter of James J. Hill, LL.D. '10, formerly president of the Great Northern Railway Company.[5] They have one son, Anson McCook, Jr., born April 2, 1908. After graduation Beard studied three years at the Columbia Law School, graduating in





Author's sketches of the ocean front
of Bonnie Dune (above) before expansion, and
(below) after expansion.

> 1898, and was admitted to the New York bar in the same year. He became a clerk in the office of Gifford & Hobbs, New York City, and in 1901 became a member of that firm, under the name of Gifford, Hobbs & Beard.[6]

By October 1912, when Beard's purchase was announced, he had already engaged an architect. On September 28th, the *Record & Guide* reported that: "F. Burrall Hoffman, Jr., 527 5th Ave., NYC, is preparing plans for an addition to the 2-1/2 story residence for Anson McCook Beard, owner, care of architect." The *Record* reported on November 9th that Hoffman had finished his plans, and on December 26th that, "Donnelly & Corrigan, [of Southampton], have received the general contract to erect a 2-1/2 story frame addition to the residence of Anson McCook Beard, owner, care of F. Burrall Hoffman, Jr., 527 5th Ave., New York City, architect."

Francis Burrall Hoffman, Jr. (1882–1980) was educated at Georgetown Prep (1893–1898), at Georgetown University (1898–1899),[7] and at Harvard College (1899–1902).[8] In 1913, he provided autobiographical notes for his Harvard class report:

> In the summer of 1903 I went to Paris to study architecture at l'Ecole des Beaux Arts. With my brother I went around the world in the winter of 1905. I returned to Paris in the fall of 1906 and took my "diplome" in architecture from the French government in the fall of 1907. I spent the following winter studying in Rome, and then returned to this country, where I entered the office of Carrere and Hastings in New York. In the fall of 1910 I started in business for myself, and am still practicing architecture under my own name.[9]

The evidence above establishes that Hoffman completed a set of drawings to enlarge Bonnie Dune; that a builder was contracted to build the enlargement to Hoffman's plans; and that an enlargement was in fact built. But did the enlargement match Hoffman's drawings exsactly? We don't know because we haven't seen the drawings. Can we infer it from published plans and photographs crediting Hoffman? No, because we haven't seen those either. And if it was built to Hoffman's drawings, why didn't he claim credit?

In September 1912, when Beard engaged Hoffman, the architect was only three years into what would be a sixty-five-year career. Nevertheless, he was fast approaching its apotheosis—Vizcaya, the Miami villa he designed for James Deering in collaboration with decorator Paul Chalfin and garden designer Diego Suarez. Vizcaya occupied much of Hoffman's time from his first visit to the site in early 1913, until the fall of 1916, a few months before Deering disembarked from his yacht and took possession of the house.[10] Was Hoffman so burdened by his obligations to Deering that he had to withdraw (or was asked to withdraw) from the Bonnie Dune project? Were changes made by the owner during construction that Hoffman disapproved of? Or was Hoffman so overloaded with commissions that he never got round to publicizing his work at Bonnie Dune? As some questions regarding the attribution are unanswered and likely to remain so, it may be best to credit Hoffman as Bonnie Dune's second architect, but with an epitaphic asterix:

*F. Burrall Hoffman, Jr., second architect of Bonnie Dune**
**By a preponderance of the evidence*
But not beyond a reasonable doubt.

Bonnie Dune was altered at least three more times. In 1938, extensive repairs were made after it suffered major damage from a direct hit by a hurricane (architect, if any, unknown). In 1993–94, Sam White restored the house (I acted as his assistant and Jed Johnson, assisted by Arthur Dunnam, had charge of the interior design). In the course of the work, White added a Venetian window to the oceanside facade and perfected the fenestration on the street side, correcting some layout oddities caused by Hoffman's addition. He also added two pavilions at each end of a new swimming pool, displacing an old garage building, and added a new entrance gate at Gin Lane. In the early 21st century, a fourth architect made some alterations indoors and added a guest house nearly the size of the main house. Given its location atop the dunes and the increasing ferocity of our climate, more architects will surely visit Bonnie Dune in the years to come.

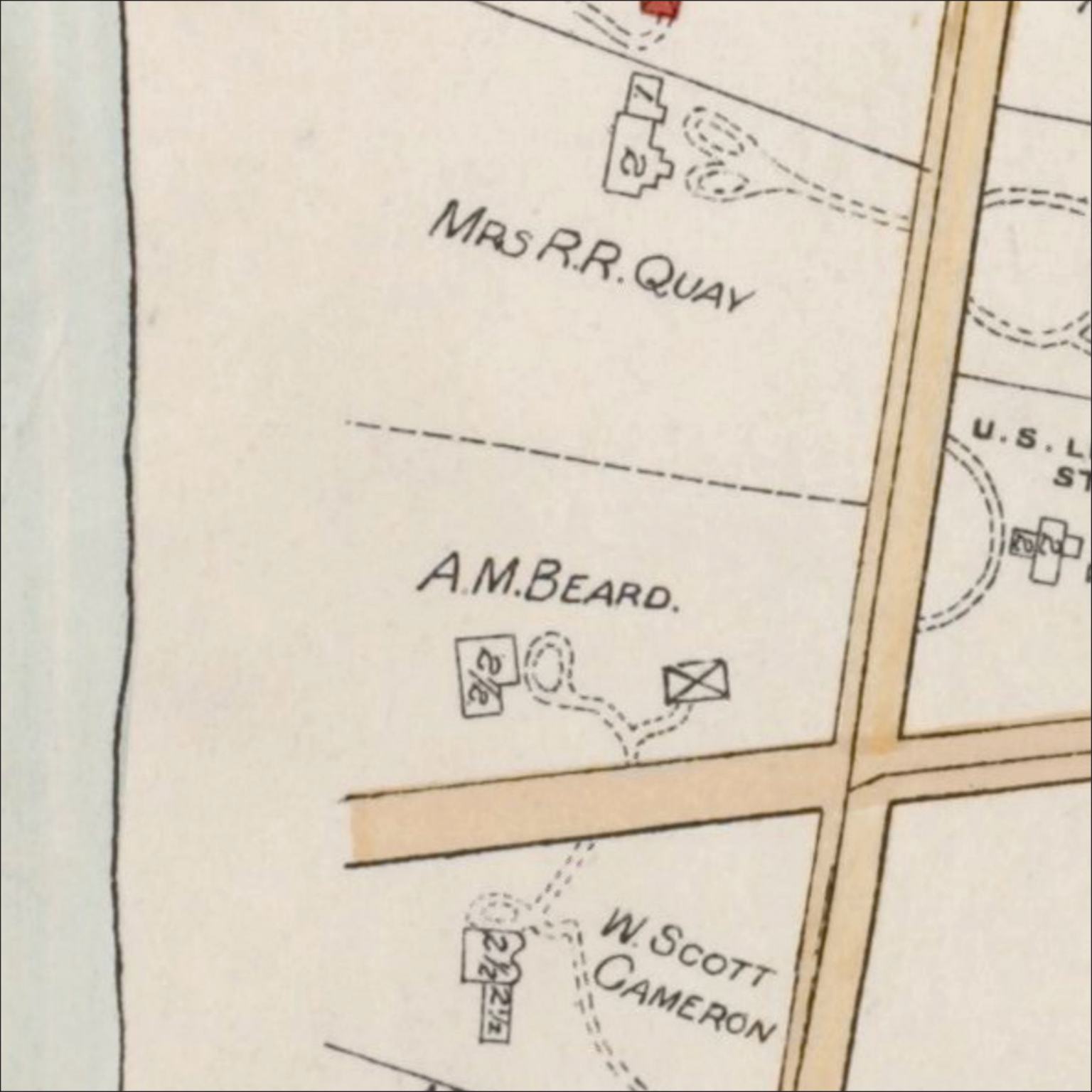
APPENDIX: COTTAGE AND COTTAGER LIST

YEAR	COTTAGE	OWNER	COTTAGER	SOURCE
1900	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	Owner Occupied	Sea-Side Times 7/1900
1901	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	Owner Occupied	Sea-Side Times 7/1901
1902	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	Owner Occupied	Sea-Side Times 6/1902
1903	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	Owner Occupied	Sea-Side Times 6/1903
1904	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	Owner Occupied	Sea-Side Times 8/1904
1905	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	James E.Brown	Sea-Side TImes 6/1905
1906	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	James E.Brown	Sea-Side Times 7/1906
1907	Not Found			
1908	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	August Belmont,Jr.	Sea-Side Times 8/1908
1909	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	Lyman Kendall	Southampton Press 6/1909
1910	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	A. Duncan Butler	Southampton Press 6/1910
1911	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	Lorenzo Semple	Southampton Press 5/1911
1912	Bonnie Dune	Elijah Kennedy	Anson McC. Beard	Southampton Press 4/1912
1913	Bonnie Dune	Anson McC. Beard	Owner Occcupied	Southampton Press 5/1913
1914	Bonnie Dune	Anson McC. Beard	Owner Occcupied	Southampton Press 7/1914
1915	Eden Cottage	Anson McC. Beard	Owner Occcupied	Southampton Press 6/1915
1916	Eden Cottage	Anson McC. Beard	Owner Occcupied	Southampton Press 5/1916

ENDNOTES

1. Paul Goldberger. "Bonnie Dune Revisited," *Architectural Digest* (August 1995).
2. Donnelly & Corrigan built many of Hoffman's Suffolk County projects, including: the Village of Southampton's Municipal Building (1911); and Ballyshear, a house for golf course designer Charles B. Macdonald (1913).
3. For the start date of construction of Olyphant's two houses, Dune Eden and Eden Cottage, see *The East Hampton Star* (November 19, 1887): 4.
4. For the date of Kennedy's purchase, see: Sally Spanburgh. *The Southampton Cottages of Gin Lane: the original Hamptons Summer Colony* (Charleston: History Press, 2012).
5. Among Beard's classmates at Yale were Ruth Hill's brothers James and Louis Hill, and his future brother-in-law George Slade (who married Ruth's sister Charlotte).
6. Roger W. Tuttle. *Quindecennial Record, Class of Eighteen Hundred Ninety-Five, Yale College* (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1911).
7. William Wickham Hoffman. *Eleven Generations of Hoffmans in New York* (New York: The American Historical Co., Inc., 1957): 35.
8. Hoffman graduated from Harvard College in 1902 as a member of the class of 1903.
9. Roger Ernst (editor). *Harvard College, Class of 1903 Decennial Report* (June 1913).
10. For the date of Hoffman's start of work at Vizcaya, and that of Deering's arrival in Miami, see: Donald W. Curl. "The Florida Architecture of F. Burrall Hoffman Jr., 1882–1980," *Florida Historical Quarterly* (Vol. 76, No. 4, 1997): 403-404.

Opposite: a detail of the 1916 Belcher Hyde map of Southampton at the corner of Gin Lane and Wyandanch Lane, illustrating Bonnie Dune owned by Anson McCook Beard.


MRS R.R. QUAY
A.M. BEARD.
W. SCOTT CAMERON
U.S.

Michael Dwyer is an architect based in Connecticut. He was the editor of Great Houses of the Hudson River (2001) and the author of Carolands (2006).